
Executive Summary

Hā‘ena, the storied place at the far northwestern corner of Kaua‘i’s beautiful North Shore, is also home to one of the State of Hawai‘i’s busiest state parks, Hā‘ena State Park. This master plan encapsulates the work of many hands over many years. Kūpuna, cultural experts, leadership from Hui Maka‘āinana o Makana (Hui), the non-profit group with a curatorship agreement with the State Department of Land and Natural Resources (DLNR), Division of State Parks (State Parks) for portions of Hā‘ena State Park, community leaders, historians, engineers, archaeologists, and scientists all pulled together to help State Parks and their planners develop a long-range plan for the 66-acre park and its ongoing management. The plan has gone through many iterations over the years and at the heart of it is the desire of the community to protect the wahi pana and wahi kapu (culturally significant areas) of Hā‘ena, along with its natural resources, for the generations yet to come. It is an ancestral home and dynamic community resource, rich with actively tended lo‘i and an ancient hula complex, natural habitats, ocean recreation, and the trailhead to the increasingly popular and world-renowned Kalalau Trail. At one of the early Master Plan Advisory Committee (MPAC) meetings, Charles “Chipper” Wichman inspired the group with the following ‘ōlelo no‘eau (proverb) from Mary Kawena Pukui:

Hana a lau, a lau ke aho,
a laila loa‘a ka i‘a kāpapa o ka moana.

*Make four hundred times, four hundred fish lines
Before planning to go after the fighting fish of the sea.
(Be well-prepared for a big project. Envision success, inspire others to see the goal,
support the preparation of skills and resources.)*

Building upon the previous efforts to prepare a draft master plan in 2001, which included extensive input from the Hā‘ena community, the proposed master plan integrates the wishes of the community today and incorporates updated technical studies. It recommends minimal physical improvements to the park in order to maintain the natural beauty and openness of the area and a reduction in the number of daily visitors during peak hours to a targeted count of 900 per day.

Only a few new structures are proposed including a Welcome Hale that is envisioned as an open traditional Hawaiian hale and located near the improved main parking lot. Interpretive and informational signage will be posted at the hale and two small comfort stations to the side of the main parking lot will provide a second set of facilities to reduce wastewater flows at the existing Kē‘ē comfort station. The current overflow parking area will serve as the main parking lot and be resurfaced with permeable paving. Portions of it will be shifted slightly makai to avoid a rockfall hazard zone. According to the rockfall hazard study completed for the park in 2013 by AECOM (Appendix H), several areas along the existing highway are predicted to be within a Class A (high estimated potential) and Class B (medium estimated potential) rockfall hazard zone. After considering costly and undesirable engineering solutions that would deface Ka Pali ‘Ōahi o Makana, the MPAC together with Hui leadership, recommended that all visitor facilities be located outside of the estimated rockfall hazard zones to the extent possible. This includes the

main parking lot, new entry turnaround and shuttle stop, and a new pedestrian-only path that connects the main parking lot with Kēʻē Beach through the loʻi. The new pedestrian path follows along the first berm of the loʻi closest to the highway and is proposed to be slightly elevated so as not to impact the berm or any of the historic resources, but will float just above the berm. The new path will provide visitors with a unique view of Makana, a famous mountain peak, as well as views of the restored wetlands, loko, and loʻi as they continue to Kēʻē.

New restrooms are also proposed near the main parking lot in order to provide additional alternative comfort stations for visitors. The latest proven green wastewater treatment technologies should be installed and these new facilities will also help lessen the use of the existing comfort station at Kēʻē, which has sensitive cultural sites nearby.

The main parking lot is envisioned to be flexible, but with a maximum of 100 striped stalls. The overall size of the main parking lot would be adjusted accordingly to support visitor use of third-party shuttles to the park, or the County's proposed North Shore shuttle should it be established, with the goal of right-sizing the parking lot. The idea is to accommodate local demand, complement shuttle volume, and minimize parking impacts outside of the park. In addition, the main parking lot would be separated into a fee-paying lot and non-fee paying lot by moveable bollards and cordons so the parking can be adaptively managed on an as-needed basis to support the varying numbers in either group parking at the park on any given day and even throughout the day. A smaller special access parking lot will be located at Kēʻē in the existing paved areas. These stalls will be reserved for ADA accessibility, the lifeguards, park staff, the Hula Complex, and other cultural practices. It will also be accessible for emergencies as well as safety and rescue operations.

Other recommendations include reestablishing the area makai of the Kalalau trailhead and encompassing Ka Ulu a Paoa Heiau and the former Allerton property as a Hula Complex, recognizing the extreme significance of this ancient wahi kapu to hula practitioners worldwide. In addition, a Cultural Gathering Place will be created inland of Kāʻīlio Point with a traditional hale and Hālau Waʻa, where educational and community programs could be staged, including overnight stays.

The plan also supports the continued restoration of the Agricultural Complex and encourages restoration of the varied historic, cultural, and natural resources throughout the park. It prioritizes the restoration of the dune complex as a potential first effort, recognizing the multiple benefits of ecological restoration, beach protection, and caring for the ancestors whose bones lay interred in the sand dunes. The plan also encourages green building design, integrated water use, reuse, and rainwater catchment, and renewable energy throughout the park.

The two key management recommendations include 1) the establishment of a Cultural Advisory Committee and a Community Advisory Committee, both of whom will be consulted on all aspects of park management and proposed improvements; and 2) the implementation of adaptive management principles with regards to all management issues at the park, including the 900 visitors per day limit and parking, which will be adjusted as needed at the park. Together, these two key management recommendations mean that the community and cultural experts will be consulted prior to the implementation of new management actions at the park as well as prior to proposed construction projects at the park.

The existing historic state highway that runs through the park is also recommended to be transferred from the State Department of Transportation to State Parks so that it may be closed to general through traffic and State Parks can shift the bulk of visitor traffic and parking outside of a potential rockfall hazard zone.

A significant proposal in the master plan is to limit the number of people who can enter the park to 900 people per day as an initial ceiling which may be adjusted over time based on overall negative or positive impacts to the area with an emphasis on public safety. This initial number includes day hikers on the Kalalau Trail but does not include overnight campers or hunters with valid permits, members of the Hui, cemetery caretakers, kupuna who have cultural or ancestral ties to the area, or attendees at special educational or cultural events such as volunteer workdays or events at the Hula Complex. This will encourage visitors to plan ahead and an informational system via the internet, text messages, and email could be developed to distribute real-time information on park access, ticket availability, special events, and weather, ocean and any hazardous conditions at the park. The Master Plan acknowledges that park access will be an ever-evolving operational issue and will likely change over time as new policies are implemented. However, the goal is to study the impacts of these proposed policies and to adjust them as appropriate to improve the long-term management of the park and visitor satisfaction.

This report also includes sections on interpretive and educational opportunities, park organization and ongoing operation, and an implementation plan with a preliminary phasing plan and associated tasks to be completed in conjunction with capital improvements.